



# Save the Gogs!



Cambridge  
Preservation Society

1937



# SAVE THE GOGS!

## I

THE houses are creeping up to the Gogs. A line of mean maisonettes has already set itself on the Stapleford heights to the West. There it is, for ever, one isolated gash, incurable. To the North, along Queen Edith's Way, another row has strung itself out at the very foot of the steep slope up to the Chalk Pits: all the fields below Missleton Hill, indeed, are sorely threatened. But the worst danger proceeds from the large field on the side of the Cambridge-Linton main road, opposite to the Golf Links. The plans for its development are far advanced: and if it prove impossible to stop them, the very centre of the Gogs region will be urbanised. And if the centre be lost, why save the circumference?

Now to the builder, the Gogs are a highly attractive proposition. Around houses there, set on high ground, a finer air will blow, and noble prospects will extend. No such air, and no such views are obtainable anywhere else. But that is exactly why they must be preserved for the use of *all*. The planting of houses on the Gogs will destroy for the people of Cambridge the most remarkable, the most beautiful, the most open and the most healthy of its geographical possessions: one, too, within easy reach of all, whether on foot or by bus. But the fate of these famous hills interests a wider public. No former member, for instance, could do more for his University than help preserve this characteristic amenity of the Cambridge that he knew and loved. *A donor of £10,000 to the Gogs would do more for all generations of Cambridge men at this moment than one of £100,000 to new Lecture Rooms or Laboratories.* But unless such donation comes now, at once, it will be too late.

As hills, of course, the Gogs are a puny range. They rise but two



hundred and thirty feet. But they rise from the vast flats of Fensland. The tradition which states that they are the highest eminences between Cambridge and the Ural Mountains is not strictly true; yet it is so near the truth that no one need be ashamed to believe it! By contrast with their surroundings these mild slopes are steep, and to mere hillocks have been rightly given the names of Giants. The views of town and country from them, North, South, East and West, are as wide and lovely as many of higher renown in the more sumptuous parts of England. And the outlook over sky and field and tree has to the full that freedom and exhilaration which attaches to the roofs of the world.

Or again, such a bastion above the plains cannot but have played a part in history. Here Mother Earth will continue to remind us of British and Roman days if she be not carved up into yards and buried beneath bungalows. To walk down the Roman Road provides the pedestrian with that sense of timelessness which is a satisfaction even beyond scenery. If ever there was a colony of Vandals established in the fort called Vandlebury, let us hope that we, their descendants, will not merit their name by wiping out their memorial. And the eighteenth century has contributed that which should make the crown of the Gogs sacrosanct to this sporting nation, if it be true that the sire of every modern racehorse, the Godolphin Arabian, is there interred.

## II

If Public Opinion, the most irresistible of forces, will rally to the crusade of preservation, the Gogs will be saved, near as the invaders have got. Not all the factors fight against us.

1. We have the important moral support of the Cambridgeshire Regional Planning Report. Here it is urged that the Gog Magogs should be scheduled for preservation under the heading "*Open Spaces of National Importance*": "Reservations to protect acres





*The Times*: copyright  
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"The houses creeping up to the Gogs."



that have a *world-wide interest*." The Report speaks of the Gogs thus:

"These form the finest hill land area near to Cambridge and anyone knowing Cambridge is familiar with the spur of high land overlooking the Town from about three miles away. A Roman road runs along the boundary of the wooded parklands of Vandlebury which crowns the hills, on the summit of which is an ancient earth-work already scheduled for protection by H.M. Office of Works.

"No great difficulty should be experienced in securing protection for the larger part, at least, of this site, which is known and appreciated widely, and has the advantage of having both scenic and historic interest.

"The open belt should be extended over the fields on Missleton Hill adjoining the Gog Magog reservation. A fine view is provided from the ancient site of War Ditch in Lime Kiln Road over the chalk pits at Cherry Hinton and Cambridge, and *any building development here would injure one of the chief amenities of the outskirts of the Town.*" (Report, pp. 81-83, italics ours.)

2. The problem is simplified by the fact that the land is held by but few owners, and with few if any of them, whether private individuals or corporate bodies, do commercial considerations rank first. Indeed, we would gratefully put it on record, that, in such tentative enquiries as the Preservation Society has already made, the sympathy and courtesy of owners has been most helpful. They too have their difficulties, which it is our first business to understand and regard with sympathy. To take three instances. The County Council has acquired much of its lands for small holdings, and it is bound by its own trusteeship. In the case of land in the hands of Colleges (e.g. Peterhouse and Caius) it must always be remembered that they can by law do nothing without the consent of the Ministry of Agriculture, which is the nation's steward to see that educational endowments are not prejudiced.



The needs of St Thomas's Hospital make it unthinkable that it can sell its lands at a price generous to us but cruel to the sick. In this instance, a Donor might, by one and the same gift, both endow a great hospital and also preserve a great landscape.

3. The Borough is with us, nay, leading us. In the new Town Planning Scheme, now at its last revision, it has taken the initiative by scheduling certain areas as "Private Open Spaces", and others as "Woodland Reservations". The fact that compensation must be made to the owners limits what any public body can do in this way. Rightly, therefore, the Borough has selected the absolutely essential view-points, and the finest natural features. These pieces are coloured yellow on the map. By its action (1) the Western crest of the Gogs, 9 on the map, with the glorious view to the South-West; (2) the noble trees on the opposite side of the road, screening Vandlebury earth-work; (3) the field marked 10; (4) part of the slope 2*b*; (5) the beechwood copse in the middle of 5*b*; and (6) the fragment of 2*a* on the South side of Worts Causeway, are more than half-way to safety. It is much, but they will be of little value in isolation. And they, too, must be paid for.

4. Similarly, the County Council has generously consented to the scheduling as "Agricultural Land" of Hills Farm, vital to the view to the East and the start of the Roman Road.

But our effort aims at more than preserving a few view-points; it would save a region,—that in colours on the map. For the sake of clearness, we may subdivide it, and treat each division separately.

The first is that bisected by Worts Causeway, the second that bisected by Hills (Cambridge-Linton) Road.

### III

Consider the first. Proceeding along Worts Causeway from West to East, the land to the North of it is owned (i) by St Thomas's Hospital, up to Lime Kiln Road, and one crucial field beyond,



CAMBRIDGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY



SAVE THE GOGS!

To the Hon. Secretary

Cambridge Preservation Society

Cambridgeshire House, Cambridge

or

To the Hon. Treasurer

Barclays Bank, Bene't Street, Cambridge

*I have pleasure in enclosing the sum of £       :       :  
as a donation towards the preservation of the Gog Magog  
Hills as open country.*

NAME .....

IN BLOCK LETTERS

ADDRESS .....

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Please do not hesitate to send a small sum (e.g. 10s.)  
if you cannot rightly afford more: it will be received  
most gratefully.

Donors of £5 and upwards will become Life  
Members of the Society, entitled to receive its  
Reports and Publications.

Donors of £100 and upwards will be inscribed on  
a permanent Roll of Patrons.



marked 1 on the map, (ii) by Peterhouse, beyond St Thomas's territory almost to the highest point, 2*a*. The land to the South of it is owned mainly by the County Council, 5*abc* and by Gonville and Caius College (the North end of the Golf Links, 6*a*).

Worts Causeway is a road of outstanding beauty. The St Thomas's, Peterhouse and County Council holdings East of Lime Kiln Road come first in importance in any scheme of preservation. The St Thomas's and Peterhouse lands indeed are the key not only to the most enchanting lines of contour, but also to the view of Cambridge from Lime Kiln Road. The properties of the Water Company, 11, and the Chalk Quarries, 12 and 13, lie also along this road; the former, whose reservoir does not damage the landscape, has no desire to erect any further structure on its land; the operations of the Chalk Quarries, discreetly veiled as they are, and also in friendly hands, interpose a still more effective barrier to any building.

Granted that it be our aim to preserve in a natural state all the rising land East of Lime Kiln Road, and the short slope West of it, how much more of the lower approaches, owned by the County Council on one side and St Thomas's Hospital on the other, would it be desirable to keep from further building? Ideally, all; but the same degree of importance cannot be attached to this lower land as to the higher. Even visionaries must cut their coat according to their cloth. But because we label this or that area of secondary importance, that does not mean it is not important. Far from it; this low land is in the most immediate danger, and for housing purposes has the greater value. *Every house erected Eastward of Netherhall Farm* will diminish the peace of our little Switzerland and the remoteness which gives it both scale and enchantment.

At the summit of Missleton Hill, Worts Causeway divides. The Causeway itself goes dipping down to Fulbourn; the Roman



Road forks sharply to the right. Between these two roads lie Hills Farm and the all-important field owned by the County Council, 5c, which is to be kept as agricultural land. So for our present appeal this point may be treated as already safe, and with it the direct view to the East, with its sister uplands, and its windmills and churches.

#### IV

Hard as it may be to save Worts Causeway, the problem of the region bisected by Hills Road is worse. The scale is larger, development nearer, frontages more numerous and valuable, levels easier.

There are four helpful factors:

1. The Golf Links, 6a, extend in a magnificent plateau from Hills Road right across to Worts Causeway and the Roman Road. They are the key to the whole region. The Club holds the land on a lease from Caius for twenty years. That gives a breathing space, invaluable in a task of this kind.

2. Vandlebury Park, 8, at the summit of the Gogs, is in the safe hands of Mr Harold Gray. There is no immediate danger here.

3. The Borough Council, as stated above, has already taken steps towards scheduling the field numbered 10 immediately below Vandlebury on the Cambridge side, and that, 9a, opposite Vandlebury on the other side of the road (Little Trees Hill *alias* Mt Magog), as "private open spaces". This does not mean that as yet these areas are safe; or can be, without benefactions to help in the inevitable cost; but we may have hope.

4. Under present arrangements the Water Company cannot supply water to any building above, roughly, the 175 ft. contour. This should act as a deterrent at any rate to sporadic building; but of course if a large number of houses was contemplated, means would probably be found for getting water to them.

So much for the helpful factors. In spite of them, the most





“A line of mean maisonettes has already set itself on the Stapleford heights to the West...one isolated gash, incurable.”  
(The foreground is a part of the important ‘area 7’.)





"Another row has strung itself out at the very foot of the steep slope up to the Chalk Pits."



critical difficulty of all has to be met here: it attaches to the fields on either side of the road, 6*b*, 6*c* and 7, which are the slopes leading up to the summits.

Area 7 on the West, 100 acres in extent, was bought some years ago by Mr H. C. Buttress for development as a housing estate. Mr Buttress, aware of the singular beauty of the site, has been at pains to secure a dignified lay-out; but whether the design and quality of the houses will match the lay-out, or whether any houses at all will not spell ruin to the Gogs as a whole, cannot be determined until the deed is done—or begun—and it is too late. Mr Buttress has quoted a price for the land of £20,000, a building price inevitably. But in our judgment, the preservation of the Gogs absolutely hinges on the preservation of this piece as agricultural land.

And this judgment is confirmed by the attitude of Caius with regard to the two fields immediately opposite it, 6*b* and 6*c*, on the other side of the road and adjoining the Golf Links. It is an attitude at once reasonable and generous. The College reserves its right to build upon them only if Mr Buttress's field opposite is built upon. That is to say, the saving of 7 automatically involves the saving also of 6*b* and 6*c*. This undertaking by Caius is not only munificent in itself, but serves as a spur to the acquisition of 7. At the same time, the necessarily high price required for that area becomes less formidable if its raising secures *ipso facto* the preservation of other areas of high building value.

## V

In appealing for help to former members of the University and former residents of Cambridge in all parts of the world, it is worth emphasising the complete unanimity of the Borough and the University over this effort. Both are doing all they can, hand in hand. The Preservation Society belongs to both and works



for both. In the eight years of its life, most of them years of 'slump', it has deserved well of both. The Coton Farms and Hills are safe. The Grantchester Meadows are safe. In the new town-planning scheme, the Borough has crowned these successes by scheduling for protection the East bank of the River, over against the Meadows, from Coe Fen to Byron's Pool. So the West and South-west have been saved. The North and East can never have problems on this scale. The one primary task remains to the South-east,—the saving of the Gogs.

To-day the Gogs are virtually intact, virgin. If we can save them, it will be the joy of a complete salvation. But our need is immediate, and it is large, £50,000. That will secure the land at present owned by St Thomas' Hospital and by Mr Buttress, and leave something in hand for the conclusion of covenants to protect the neighbouring lands from building.

Reader, we pray your help with small sum or with great. In such a permanent way let every Cambridge man celebrate the coronation of a Cambridge King.

*While this pamphlet was in the press, the encouraging news came that the Pilgrim Trust has promised £5000 towards the purchase of Area 7, provided the remaining £15,000 be raised within two years.*



# THE "GOGS"

